



*Making Social Care
Better for People*

inspection report

Fostering Services

**Leicestershire County Council
Fostering Service**

County Hall

Glenfield

Leicester

Leicestershire

LE3 8RL

Week of Monday, 7th March 2005

Commission for Social Care Inspection

Launched in April 2004, the Commission for Social Care Inspection (CSCI) is the single inspectorate for social care in England.

The Commission combines the work formerly done by the Social Services Inspectorate (SSI), the SSI/Audit Commission Joint Review Team and the National Care Standards Commission.

The role of CSCI is to:

- Promote improvement in social care
- Inspect all social care - for adults and children - in the public, private and voluntary sectors
- Publish annual reports to Parliament on the performance of social care and on the state of the social care market
- Inspect and assess 'Value for Money' of council social services
- Hold performance statistics on social care
- Publish the 'star ratings' for council social services
- Register and inspect services against national standards
- Host the Children's Rights Director role.

Inspection Methods & Findings

SECTION B of this report summarises key findings and evidence from this inspection. The following 4-point scale is used to indicate the extent to which standards have been met or not met by placing the assessed level alongside the phrase "Standard met?"

The 4-point scale ranges from:

- 4 - Standard Exceeded (Commendable)
- 3 - Standard Met (No Shortfalls)
- 2 - Standard Almost Met (Minor Shortfalls)
- 1 - Standard Not Met (Major Shortfalls)

'O' or blank in the 'Standard met?' box denotes standard not assessed on this occasion.

'9' in the 'Standard met?' box denotes standard not applicable.

'X' is used where a percentage value or numerical value is not applicable.

FOSTERING SERVICE INFORMATION

Local Authority Fostering Service?

YES

Name of Authority

Leicestershire County Council Fostering Service

Address

County Hall, Glenfield, Leicester, LE3 8RL

Local Authority Manager

Cath Sartoris

Tel No:

0116 2759 267

Address

Social Services Department, Bassett Street, South Wigston, Leicestershire, LE18 4PE

Fax No:

0116 2759 382

Email Address

Registered Fostering Agency (IFA)

NO

Name of Agency

Tel No

Address

Fax No

Email Address

Registered Number of IFA

Name of Registered Provider

Name of Registered Manager (if applicable)

Date of first registration

Date of latest registration certificate

Registration Conditions Apply ?

NO

Date of last inspection

15/03/04

Date of Inspection Visit		7th March 2005	ID Code
Time of Inspection Visit		09:00 am	
Name of Inspector	1	Trisha Gibbs	071373
Name of Inspector	2	Sharon Treadwell	071369
Name of Inspector	3		
Name of Inspector	4		
Name of Lay Assessor (if applicable) Lay assessors are members of the public independent of the CSCI. They accompany inspectors on some inspections and bring a different perspective to the inspection process.			
Name of Specialist (e.g. Interpreter/Signer) (if applicable)			
Name of Establishment Representative at the time of inspection		Cath Sartoris	

Introduction to Report and Inspection

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Reports and Notifications to the Local Authority and Secretary of State

Implementation of Statutory Requirements from last Inspection

Statutory Requirements from this Inspection

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Part B: Inspection Methods & Findings

(National Minimum Standards For Fostering Services)

- 1. Statement of purpose**
- 2. Fitness to carry on or manage a fostering service**
- 3. Management of the fostering service**
- 4. Securing and promoting welfare**
- 5. Recruiting, checking, managing, supporting and training staff and foster carers**
- 6. Records**
- 7. Fitness of premises**
- 8. Financial requirements**
- 9. Fostering panels**
- 10. Short-term breaks**
- 11. Family and friend carers**

Part C: Provider's Response

C.1. Provider's comments

C.2. Action Plan

C.3. Provider's agreement

Appendix A Responses to Questionnaires:

Compilation of answers from questionnaires and requests for comments received from foster carers and children placed in foster care.

- 1. Children's Questionnaires**
- 2. Foster Carers' Questionnaires**

INTRODUCTION TO REPORT AND INSPECTION

Independent and local authority fostering services which fall within the jurisdiction of the Commission for Social Care Inspection (CSCI) are subject to inspection, to establish if the service is meeting the National Minimum Standards for Fostering Services and the requirements of the Care Standards Act 2000, the Fostering Services Regulations 2002 and the Children Act 1989 as amended.

This document summarises the inspection findings of the CSCI in respect of Leicestershire County Council Fostering Service. The inspection findings relate to the National Minimum Standards for Fostering Services published by the Secretary of State under sections 23 and 49 of the Care Standards Act 2000, for independent and local authority fostering services respectively.

The Fostering Services Regulations 2002 are secondary legislation, with which a service provider must comply. Service providers are expected to comply fully with the National Minimum Standards. The National Minimum standards will form the basis for judgements by the CSCI in relation to independent fostering agencies regarding registration, the imposition and variation of registration conditions and any enforcement action, and in relation to local authority fostering services regarding notices to the local authority and reports to the Secretary of State under section 47 of the Care Standards Act 2000.

The report follows the format of the National Minimum Standards and the numbering shown in the report corresponds to that of the standards.

The report will show the following:

- Inspection methods used
- Key findings and evidence
- Overall ratings in relation to the standards
- Compliance with the Regulations
- Notifications to the Local Authority and Reports to the Secretary of State
- Required actions on the part of the provider
- Recommended good practice
- Summary of the findings
- Report of the Lay Assessor (where relevant)
- Providers response and proposed action plan to address findings

This report is a public document.

INSPECTION VISITS

Inspections will be undertaken in line with the agreed regulatory framework with additional visits as required. This is in accordance with the provisions of the Care Standards Act 2000. The following inspection methods have been used in the production of this report.

The report represents the inspector's findings from the evidence found at the specified inspection dates.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE SERVICES PROVIDED.

Leicestershire County Council fostering service is managed by the Service Manager Family Placements. Two Team Managers are responsible for two supervision groups of a total of 16 social worker staff, (10 full time equivalent), and the day-to-day provision of the service. The groups operate from the same premises, one focussing on maintaining an active duty point for placement requests, and the other on recruitment and assessment functions. Both groups also carry a caseload of carers, for whom they provide ongoing advice and support. Within each group there are supervising social workers dedicated to specific fostering tasks and activities.

At the time of the commencement of this Inspection, up to 269 carers were providing placements designed to respond appropriately to the differing placement needs of Leicestershire County Councils Looked After Children. For the most part the placements continue to be of a 'mainstream' family care nature however Family care (Kinship) placements constitute a growing area for service development; 43 families in December 2004. The service also provides Remand and Community Placements and Contract Care, both of which are operated within tight formal arrangements, and supported with a high level of contact and supervision from the foster care service. These schemes provide placements for young people presenting with very challenging or offending behaviour. The service also includes a substantial group of Short Break Carers who provide flexible respite care to children who have disabilities, in addition to a Contact Carer who provides respite care to children with profound disabilities.

The foster care service undertakes the full range of fostering activities, recruiting, assessing, approving and supporting carers. Supervision and annual reviews identify achievements and ongoing training needs.

PART A SUMMARY OF INSPECTION FINDINGS

Inspector's Summary

(This is an overview of the inspector's findings, which includes good practice, quality issues, areas to be addressed or developed and any other concerns).

The following Inspection of the Leicestershire County Council Fostering Service was a good and positive one. Three requirements and seven good practice recommendations have been made. The three requirements relate to the fostering service ensuring clarity of carer Approval Status. Several commendations have been made in recognition of good practice and initiative.

For the purpose of this Inspection four foster carers, and the children placed with them were systematically tracked through the inspection of case files, home visits and discussions with relevant staff. In addition to this four files of recently approved foster carers were also Inspected, but these carers were not interviewed.

Inspectors were appreciative of the welcome and cooperation afforded them by carers visited. Carers spoke openly and helpfully about their experiences of fostering and of the support they received.

This methodology subsequently informed the Inspection assessment and provided the evidence for each Standard. Policies and Procedures, the Carer's Handbook, and other documents have been fully Inspected over the last two Inspections, and were consulted only for clarification purposes on this occasion.

The Inspectors acknowledge that such a small sample of carers (four plus four) tracked, is not representative of the large carer group, (up to 269 carers) however this did give a good and ultimately positive 'snapshot' of the service being provided.

The Commission for Social Care Inspection has identified 16 Core Standards out of the 32 National Minimum Standards for Fostering Services, which must be Inspected at every Inspection. The remaining Standards may be Inspected or not, at the Inspectors discretion and assessment of risk. Any Standards not Inspected have been identified.

Carers, children and placing social workers provided very helpful feedback and observation about the fostering service through returned questionnaires. These have been consulted and drawn upon during the Inspection. Nearly all of the 22 children's comments indicated that they were happy in their placement and felt consulted by their carers, but 9 said they also missed their families.

Statement of Purpose (Standard 1)

The work of the fostering service is very well represented in the Statement of Purpose.

Fitness to provide or manage a Fostering Service (Standards 2 & 3)

Standard 2 inspected and fully met.

The managers carrying on and managing the fostering service are suitably qualified and have been subject to statutory checks.

Management of the Fostering Service (Standards 4 & 5)

Standards not Inspected on this occasion.

Securing and promoting welfare (Standards 6-14)

Standard 14 not Inspected.

All other Standards fully met excepting Standard 8 almost met.

Two recommendations made Standard 6.

Two requirements and two recommendations Standard 8

There is good information and training available to carers on the issue of safer caring, and those visited were clear about their responsibility to provide safe care. Some supervising social workers were also seen to prioritise this in their supervision of carers.

A recommendation has been made for risk assessments on bedroom sharing to be routinely undertaken on every occasion of children sharing bedrooms.

A recommendation has also been made for the completion of Health and Safety risk assessments to take full account of areas not covered in the BAAF 3 Health and Safety risk assessment format.

Under Standard 8 requirements and recommendations have been made with regard to any change to carers' approval status being recorded and evidenced, with clarity as to who has authorised this. Inspectors noted that several of the carers tracked had had their approval status changed, but it was not possible to locate how, why and when this had occurred. It was also difficult to ascertain evidence of the 'matching' process simply through the file tracking method since there was little or no written information covering this in the files.

The fostering service is planning training for carers on contact issues under Standard 10, and will work with placing social workers to provide this. This is a positive training development, since carers and social workers often identify difficulties in how carers manage children's behaviour and feelings at these times.

Children spoken to say carers consult with them, feedback from questionnaires also confirmed this.

Under Standard 12 it is noted that there is still no separate Health record being maintained for children in placement, and that Health information continues to be recorded by carers in one communal diary. A requirement has been made under Standard 24 with regard to this.

Foster carers visited were enthusiastic about Education awareness training sessions provided by the service. Those tracked actively supported children placed in their respective education settings.

Recruiting, checking, managing, supporting and training staff and foster carers (Standards 15-23)

Standard 16,18,20,22 and 23 not Inspected.

All other Standards fully met.

The Fostering Managers confirmed that although there were generally enough carers to provide placements to Looked After Children, there were shortages of placements in particular areas. A Statistical Report and Action Plan identifies the mainstream long term fostering resource as representing the greatest area of need. Initiatives to recruit new carers are ongoing.

All carers visited to during the Inspection made positive comments about training they had

recently attended. They were able to link the training with the fostering task, and their responsibilities as carers. Positive training opportunities for carers are being developed.

Form F Assessments looked at were of a good standard, however in three out of the four files looked at of recently approved carers, only one full Health and Safety risk assessment (BAAF 3) had been undertaken, and placements had already been made. Others contained a short checklist. (BAAF 2) A recommendation has been made that the full Health and Safety risk assessment should be carried out prior to any placement being made.

Carers tracked were positive about the support provided to them by the service, and about their supervising social worker. A recommendation has been made under Standard 21 for Team Managers to determine carer supervision levels at Annual Review.

Records (Standards 24&25)

Standard 24 almost met Standard 25 not Inspected.

Two requirements and one recommendation made Standard 24.

Recording on carers' files was good. A recommendation has been made with regard to the need for individual records to be maintained by carers on the children placed with them, and not being maintained in a communal diary. Two requirements have also made for the fostering service to include approval status on the register of carers, and for the fostering service to include the terms of approval on Foster Carer Agreements.

Fitness of premises for use as a Fostering Service (Standard 26)

Standard not Inspected.

Financial requirements (Standards 27-28)

Standards not Inspected.

Fostering Panels (Standard 30)

Standard fully met.

Applicants are now invited to attend the Fostering Panel. The Fostering Panel operates to a busy schedule and the team of Panel members represent a good mix of skills and experience. The addition of a young person who has had experience of being in care is seen to be a positive addition.

Short term breaks (Standard 31) and Family and Friends as carers (Standard 32)

Standard 31 exceeded and Standard 32 fully met.

The fostering service provides a very good short break scheme and the development of contract care provision, to facilitate respite care for children who have profound disabilities, has been commended.

A dedicated worker provides the assessment and review function for the growing number of Family and Friends carers. The carers tracked for Inspection were being offered the same level of training and support as mainstream carers,

Reports and Notifications to the Local Authority and Secretary of State

(Local Authority Fostering Services Only)

The following statutory Reports or Notifications are to be made under the Care Standards Act as a result of the findings of this inspection:

Report to the Secretary of State under section 47(3) of the Care Standards Act 2000 that the Commission considers the Local Authority's fostering service satisfies the regulatory requirements:

NO

Notice to the Local Authority under section 47(5) of the Care Standards Act 2000 of failure(s) to satisfy regulatory requirements in their fostering service which are not substantial, and specifying the action the Commission considers the Authority should take to remedy the failure(s), informing the Secretary of State of that Notice:

NO

Report to the Secretary of State under section 47(4)(a) of the Care Standards Act of a failure by a Local Authority fostering service to satisfy regulatory requirements which is not considered substantial:

NO

Report to the Secretary of State under section 47(1) of the Care Standards Act 2000 of substantial failure to satisfy regulatory requirements by a Local Authority fostering service:

NO

The grounds for the above Report or Notice are:

No longer applicable.

Implementation of Statutory Requirements from Last Inspection

Requirements from last Inspection visit fully actioned?

YES

If No please list below

STATUTORY REQUIREMENTS

Identified below are areas not addressed from the last inspection report which indicate a non-compliance with the Care Standards Act 2000 and Fostering Services Regulations 2002.

No.	Regulation	Standard	Required actions	
			NONE	

Action is being taken by the Commission for Social Care Inspection to monitor compliance with the above requirements.

COMPLIANCE WITH CONDITIONS OF REGISTRATION (IF APPLICABLE)
(Registered Independent Fostering Agencies only)

Providers and managers of registered independent fostering agencies must comply with statutory conditions of their registration. The conditions applying to this registration are listed below, with the inspector's assessment of compliance from the evidence at the time of this inspection.

Condition	Compliance	
Comments		

Regulation Inspector	Trisha Gibbs	Signature	
Second Inspector	Sharon Treadwell	Signature	
Regulation Manager	Sue Shaw	Signature	
Date			

STATUTORY REQUIREMENTS IDENTIFIED DURING THIS INSPECTION

Action Plan: The appropriate Officer of the Local Authority or the Registered Person (as applicable) is requested to provide the Commission with an Action Plan, which indicates how requirements are to be addressed. This action plan will be made available on request to the Area Office.

STATUTORY REQUIREMENTS

Identified below are areas addressed in the main body of the report which indicate non-compliance with the Care Standards Act 2000, the Children Act 1989, the Fostering Services Regulations 2002, or the National Minimum Standards for Fostering Services. The Authority or Registered Person(s) is/are required to comply within the given time scales in order to comply with the Regulatory Requirements for fostering services.

No.	Regulation	Standard *	Requirement	
1	34	FS8	The Fostering Service Manager is required to ensure that there is a Foster Placement Agreement in place for all children placed within the service.	June 30 th 2005
2	33 and 29	FS8	The Fostering Service is required to evidence authorisation of, and reasons for, the placement of children and young people with carers outside of their formally approved status.	May 30 th 2005
3	28 (5) (b)	FS22	The Fostering Service Manager must ensure that the Foster Carer Agreement includes terms of approval as indicated in Schedule 5 of the Fostering Regulations.	October 31 st 2005

GOOD PRACTICE RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THIS INSPECTION

Identified below are areas addressed in the main body of the report which relate to the National Minimum Standards and are seen as good practice issues which should be considered for implementation by the Authority or Registered Person(s).

No.	Refer to Standard *	Recommendation Action
1	FS6	The Fostering Service Managers are recommended to ensure that the full comprehensive Health and Safety risk assessments are in place for all newly approved carers before any placement is made.
2	FS6	The Fostering Service Managers are recommended to implement the routine completion of risk assessments whenever children share a bedroom.
3	FS8	The Fostering Service Manager is recommended to develop a simple pro forma to evidence authorisation of any change of carer approval status.
4	FS8	The Fostering Service Manager is recommended to draw up written guidelines detailing the process for amending approval status, and indicating the need to confirm at Annual Review or Panel.
5	FS19	The Team Managers are recommended discuss with placing social workers areas of training where their contribution would be valuable.
6	FS21	The Team Managers are recommended to determine the minimum level of supervision frequency at Annual Review, and differentiate these from home visits.
7	FS24	The Fostering Service Managers are recommended to ensure that carers maintain individual, and not communal records on the children placed with them.

*** Note: You may refer to the relevant standard in the remainder of the report by omitting the 2-letter prefix e.g FS10 refers to Standard 10.**

PART B**INSPECTION METHODS & FINDINGS**

The following inspection methods have been used in the production of this report

Number of Inspector days spent	10
Survey of placing authorities	NO
Foster carer survey	YES
Foster children survey	YES
Checks with other organisations and Individuals	YES
• Directors of Social services	YES
• Child protection officer	YES
• Specialist advisor (s)	NO
• Local Foster Care Association	YES
Tracking Individual welfare arrangements	YES
• Interview with children	YES
• Interview with foster carers	YES
• Interview with agency staff	YES
• Contact with parents	YES
• Contact with supervising social workers	YES
• Examination of files	YES
Individual interview with manager	YES
Information from provider	YES
Individual interviews with key staff	YES
Group discussion with staff	YES
Interview with panel chair	YES
Observation of foster carer training	NO
Observation of foster panel	YES
Inspection of policy/practice documents	YES
Inspection of records	YES
Interview with individual child	NO
Date of Inspection	07/03/05
Time of Inspection	09.00
Duration Of Inspection (hrs)	94

The following pages summarise the key findings and evidence from this inspection, together with the CSCI assessment of the extent to which the National Minimum Standards have been met. The following scale is used to indicate the extent to which standards have been met or not met by placing the assessed level alongside the phrase "Standard met?"

The scale ranges from:

- | | |
|-------------------------|--------------------|
| 4 - Standard Exceeded | (Commendable) |
| 3 - Standard Met | (No Shortfalls) |
| 2 - Standard Almost Met | (Minor Shortfalls) |
| 1 - Standard Not Met | (Major Shortfalls) |

"0" in the "Standard met?" box denotes standard not assessed on this occasion.

"9" in the "Standard met?" box denotes standard not applicable.

"X" is used where a percentage value or numerical value is not applicable.

Statement of Purpose

The intended outcome for the following standard is:

- There is clear statement of the aims and objectives of the fostering service and the fostering service ensures that they meet those aims and objectives.

Standard 1 (1.1 - 1.6)

There is a clear statement of the aims and objectives of the fostering service and of what facilities and services they provide.

Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	3
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The Leicestershire County Council fostering service Statement of Purpose was reviewed and updated in December 2004. This is a very good and informative Statement that details all areas of the service provided and acknowledges the need for close cooperation with fieldwork staff in order to ensure positive placements for Looked After Children.

A small descriptive leaflet for older and younger children is given to children entering the foster care service, along with other information provided to them by the Local Authority.

Fitness to Carry On or Manage a Fostering Service

The intended outcomes for the following set of standards are:

- The fostering service is provided and managed by those with the appropriate skills and experience to do so efficiently and effectively and by those who are suitable to work with children.

Standard 2 (2.1 - 2.4)

The people involved in carrying on and managing the fostering service possess the necessary business and management skills and financial expertise to manage the work efficiently and effectively and have the necessary knowledge and experience of childcare and fostering to do so in a professional manner.

Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?
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	0
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This Standard has not been identified as a core Standard and as such has not been Inspected on this occasion. This Standard was last Inspected on March 16th 2004 and assessed as being fully met.

Standard 3 (3.1 - 3.4)

Any persons carrying on or managing the fostering service are suitable people to run a business concerned with safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children.

Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?
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	3
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A new full time Team Manager has been appointed since the last Inspection, replacing a part time Team Manager post. The personnel record for the new Team Manager was Inspected and all required checks, Criminal Records Bureau clearance, and references were in evidence.

Management of the Fostering Service

The intended outcomes for the following set of standards are:

- The fostering service is managed ethically and efficiently, delivering a good quality foster care service and avoiding confusion and conflicts of role.

Standard 4 (4.1 – 4.5)

There are clear procedures for monitoring and controlling the activities of the fostering service and ensuring quality performance.

Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	0
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This Standard has not been identified as a core Standard and as such has not been Inspected on this occasion. This Standard was last Inspected on March 16th 2004 and assessed as being fully met.

Number of statutory notifications made to CSCI in last 12 months:	4
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Death of a child placed with foster parents.	0
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Referral to Secretary of State of a person working for the service as unsuitable to work with children.	0
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Serious illness or accident of a child.	1
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Outbreak of serious infectious disease at a foster home.	0
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Actual or suspected involvement of a child in prostitution.	0
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Serious incident relating to a foster child involving calling the police to a foster home.	2
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Serious complaint about a foster parent.	1
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Initiation of child protection enquiry involving a child.	0
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Number of complaints made to CSCI about the agency in the past 12 months:	0
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Number of the above complaints which were substantiated:	0
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Standard 5 (5.1 - 5.4)

The fostering service is managed effectively and efficiently.

Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	0
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This Standard has not been identified as a core Standard and as such has not been Inspected on this occasion. This Standard was last Inspected on March 16th 2004 and assessed as being fully met.

Securing and Promoting Welfare

The intended outcome for the following set of standards is:

- The fostering service promotes and safeguards the child/young person's physical, mental and emotional welfare.

Standard 6 (6.1 - 6.9)

The fostering service makes available foster carers who provide a safe, healthy and nurturing environment.

Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?
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Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?
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Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?
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Foster carers receive information and on going training about safe care commencing at the assessment process. All carers are provided with written guidance in the Fostering Network 'Safer Care' booklet and the Carer's Handbook. Carer's visited confirmed that they had received this information, were aware of the issues, and had also developed their own safe care policies. **This is commendable.**

All four carer files tracked contained the comprehensive (BAAF 3) Health and Safety Risk Assessments, however only one of the four recently approved carer files contained the full Health and Safety Risk Assessment, the others containing only a completed shortened checklist (BAAF 2), despite these new carers having had their first placements already made. **The Fostering Service should ensure that the comprehensive Health and Safety Risk Assessment is always undertaken before any placement is made and preferably during the approval process. Standard 6.7**

One set of carers visited by the Inspectors, had created a very good children's playroom, situated in their converted garden garage and the children clearly enjoyed having their own special area. This facility had not been risk assessed however (e.g. in terms of supervision and safety) and **supervising social workers are reminded to risk assess any facility that might not be included in the BAAF Health and Safety formats.**

All four carers visited, provided a warm, clean and safe environment for children and young people. Homes were child centred and the carers knowledgeable about safety measures that should be taken account of in terms of the age group of children or young people they provide placements for. **This is commended.**

In one carer's home two children (not related) were sharing a small bedroom. Although the Inspector confirmed that both children were in agreement with this arrangement **supervising social workers are recommended to routinely undertake a risk assessment whenever children share a bedroom, whether they are related or not. Standard 6.5**

There was good evidence in files of Health and Safety matters being discussed at Annual Reviews.

Standard 7 (7.1 - 7.7)

The fostering service ensures that children and young people, and their families, are provided with foster care services which value diversity and promote equality.

Key Findings and Evidence**Standard met?****3**

The Fostering Service Statement of Purpose and Foster Carer Agreement, gives a clear indication of the expectations laid upon carers to respect, value and encourage children's racial and cultural heritage. This is endorsed through written information and training provision and there are systems in place within the Children's Services Sector to track and monitor services being provided to children who have specific racial, cultural and religious needs.

None of the four carers tracked this year were providing placements at the time of the Inspection, where special religious or cultural needs had to be provided for.

The fostering service has made notable effort in developing the innovative provision of a respite placement for children and young people who have profound and complex disabilities, and this is referred to in Standard 31.

There were also very good examples of children and young people being encouraged and supported to develop hobbies and interests. One small girl was being financially supported to learn French at her pre school and gave a demonstration of this by counting in French during the Inspectors visit. Other children in their questionnaires said among other things that they enjoyed horse riding, swimming, football, dancing and collecting model cars.

Standard 8 (8.1 - 8.7)

Local authority fostering services, and voluntary agencies placing children in their own right, ensure that each child or young person placed in foster care is carefully matched with a carer capable of meeting her/his assessed needs. For agencies providing foster carers to local authorities, those agencies ensure that they offer carers only if they represent appropriate matches for a child for whom a local authority is seeking a carer.

Key Findings and Evidence**Standard met?****2**

In the four files tracked during this Inspection, it was difficult, and in some cases not possible, to ascertain through written information, the process whereby children had been matched with their carers.

Duty referral forms were in place for some children and these did indicate an initial matching process, however these were not on file for all children. Since Looked After Children Placement Agreements are not maintained in carer files but given to carers, carers were asked if they had received copies of these. Most carers either showed the Inspector their Looked After Children forms or said they had received them, however there was one example of no paperwork being made available in respect of a baby placed with carers in December. The foster carers confirmed that they had received no information and no Placement Agreement had been provided or signed.

The Fostering Service Managers must ensure that a written Foster Placement Agreement is in place for all children and young people accommodated within the service. Standard 8.4 Regulation 34 (3)

The Inspectors did evidence the matching process being undertaken at the Fostering Service Duty Desk during last year's Inspection. In addition to this an Inspector observed verbal discussion about placements during the team meeting, when it was very clear that supervising social workers were giving serious consideration to the matching of children referred on duty, with the carers available.

In three out of the four carers tracked, children or young people had been placed with carers outside of their approval status. In only one of these cases was it possible to track at which point the approval status had been changed, how this had been authorised, and why the agreement had been given. The Inspectors established that change of approval status is routinely considered at Annual Review, and would be formally authorised at this point. On some occasions this would be taken back to the Fostering Panel for ratification, however it was not clear under which circumstances this would happen. **The Fostering Service is required to evidence authorisation of, and reasons for, the placement of children and young people with carers outside of the carer's formally approved status. Regulation 29 (10) (c) Regulation 33 (b)**

It is also recommended that a simple pro forma be developed to evidence authorisation of the above requirement, to be maintained on file with the Foster Carer Agreement.

It is recommended that written guidelines be provided for staff, detailing the process for amending approval status, and indicating the need for this to be confirmed at Annual Review or Panel.

It was noted that that the recently introduced Placement Agreement Meeting would be an ideal opportunity to confirm matching considerations. It was also noted that the Remand and Community Scheme placements were tightly matched and monitored.

The new Estate Agents details provided by carers for children about to be placed, also gives evidence consideration of matching and consultation. These were seen on some files.

The Inspectors having visited carers and children in their homes, and talked to the supervising social workers about placements, were satisfied that all placements were well matched.

Standard 9 (9.1 - 9.8)

The fostering service protects each child or young person from all forms of abuse, neglect, exploitation and deprivation.

Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	3
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Leicestershire County Council has established comprehensive Multi Agency Child Protection Procedures and an Area Child Protection Committee. Carers receive different levels of training in Child Protection and Safe Caring and are also provided with training in specific areas of Child Protection and the care of children who have been abused. Agreements require that carers cooperate with Child Protection procedures and placement plans.

Carers are provided with training and written guidelines on the management of children's behaviour, and sign to agree that they will only use 'punishments' that are acceptable to the foster care service and will not smack or slap children. Carers spoken to were again very aware of acceptable and unacceptable sanctions. All carers showed an awareness of safe care and household rules.

Carers visited confirmed that they had received training on Child Protection and some were about to attend for training on child sexual abuse.

It has been necessary for one set of carers to install CCTV in young people's bedrooms in view of the young people's significant, complex medical and healthcare needs. A written agreement for this has been devised by the carers and signed by parents.

Children's responses in their questionnaires also demonstrated that appropriate sanctions were being carried out, although some said that there was no need for punishment since they were 'good all of the time'.

The foster service maintains a system for the collation of complaints and allegations specific to the service, and these were again noted by Inspectors to be clearly and systematically documented.

Children were not asked in questionnaires about being bullied. (see below)

Percentage of foster children placed who report never or hardly ever being bullied:

x

Standard 10 (10.1 - 10.9)

The fostering service makes sure that each child or young person in foster care is encouraged to maintain and develop family contacts and friendships as set out in her/his care plan and/or foster placement agreement.

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

The Fostering Service supports the Social Service Department's policy on the active promotion of contact between Looked After Children and their parents, whenever this is possible and appropriate. The Carer's Handbook outlines the principles and expectations that carers will support contact in their home, where possible and appropriate.

The Team Managers confirmed that training for carers is being planned this year on the issue of children's contact with their parents. Placing social workers will be actively participating in this training, to raise carers' awareness about the Local Authority's legal responsibilities in relation to Looked After Children, and the need for children to have contact with their parents in most cases. Placing social workers have identified, in their feedback to the Commission for Social Care Inspection, general concerns about some carers' understanding and support of contact arrangements. Inspectors noted that some carers did indicate (both verbally and in questionnaires) that managing children after their contact with parents could be challenging and at times distressing. **This planned training is therefore commendable, and will hopefully enable carers and social workers to discuss the matter as openly and fully as possible.**

It is of note that most children in returned questionnaires said that the worst thing about being fostered was not being with their family.

The Placement Agreement Meeting agenda provides the facility for contact risk assessment to take place when contact is undertaken at a carer's home.

Carers visited showed a good understanding of the need for contact with some working well with parents.

Standard 11 (11.1 - 11.5)

The fostering service ensures that children's opinions, and those of their families and others significant to the child, are sought over all issues that are likely to affect their daily life and their future.

Key Findings and Evidence**Standard met?**

3

There was good evidence in all files tracked of children being given information about Children's Rights by supervising social workers or carers. It was also evident that young people and children attended meetings about themselves, if this was considered appropriate, and that carers routinely involved them in discussions about day-to-day matters. In cases tracked, children who had a disability were consulted with using personalised communication systems, and placing social workers positively commented on this.

Children in questionnaires confirmed that their carers talked to them about a range of things ranging from meals, television programmes, holidays to how they wanted bedrooms decorated.

One carer was seen to be currently assisting a young person to represent their wishes to the Children's Rights Officer.

Standard 12 (12.1 - 12.8)

The fostering service ensures that it provides foster care services which help each child or young person in foster care to receive health care which meets her/his needs for physical, emotional and social development, together with information and training appropriate to her/his age and understanding to enable informed participation in decisions about her/his health needs.

Key Findings and Evidence**Standard met?**

3

Carers are made aware of their role and responsibility to maintain children's good health and to fulfil medical needs, through their agreements, training and ongoing supervision.

There was good evidence on file that health matters were being discussed in Annual Reviews and in Supervision sessions. Reference was made to statutory Health Assessments and to contact with appropriate health professionals.

Carers providing placement for children with disabilities and complex health needs were tracked for Inspection purposes and seen to be providing a high standard of care.

They maintained excellent medical and health care records and were highly experienced and knowledgeable about the needs of the children they were looking after. They had received specialist training as and when necessary.

However in other placements tracked during the Inspection, there were instances of carers not being provided with full health/medical information about three children placed with them. Supervising social workers are reminded to be vigilant in pursuing the receipt of this information from placing social workers, in order that carers are aware of children's full medical and health needs.

The Carer's Handbook provides very good guidelines on 'Medical Information/Short Breaks and Respite' detailing the management and transfer of medication between parents and carers.

The Fostering Service provides an annual Health Awareness Road Show for carers and this

provides information about a range of Health issues. The Fostering Service Manager indicated that policy and practice guidance on substance misuse would be issued to carers in the near future.

The pilot scheme referred to in the last two years Inspection reports, i.e. for Leicestershire County Council to provide each Looked After Child with an individual Health Care Passport containing an up to date record of essential health information to follow the child through future placement, has still to be implemented. Most carers still record health care information, along with other events, for all children in one communal diary. **(See Standard 24).**

Standard 13 (13.1 - 13.8)

The fostering service gives a high priority to meeting the educational needs of each child or young person in foster care and ensures that she/he is encouraged to attain her/his full potential.

Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	3
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The need for carers to support children with their ongoing education is very clearly stated in the Carer's Handbook. Carers sign in their agreements with the service that they will promote children's educational attainment and employment.

All carers tracked and visited during this Inspection demonstrated a good awareness of the educational needs of the children placed with them, and were liaising with schools, and advocating on the children's behalf if necessary. Carers providing respite care for children with profound disabilities have provided a colourful stimulating environment for them. **This is commended.** There was evidence on file that Personal Education Plans had either been, or were in the process of being completed.

Some carers had recently attended a range of training sessions provided by the Fostering Service on the theme of Education and they spoke enthusiastically about this. It is anticipated that this training will become a core course for all foster carers.

Standard 14 (14.1 - 14.5)

The fostering service ensures that their foster care services help to develop skills, competence and knowledge necessary for adult living.

Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	0
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This Standard has not been identified as a core Standard and as such has not been Inspected on this occasion. This Standard was last Inspected on March 16th 2004 and assessed as being fully met.

Recruiting, Checking, Managing, Supporting and Training Staff and Foster Carers

The intended outcome for the following set of standards is:

- The people who work in or for the fostering service are suitable to work with children and young people and they are managed, trained and supported in such a way as to ensure the best possible outcomes for children in foster care. The number of staff and carers and their range of qualifications and experience are sufficient to achieve the purposes and functions of the organisation.

Standard 15 (15.1 - 15.8)

Any people working in or for the fostering service are suitable people to work with children and young people and to safeguard and promote their welfare.

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

Employees of the foster care service are recruited according to the Local Authority's policies and procedures. Managers within the Children and Family Services, who are responsible for the recruitment and selection of staff, are qualified and trained to do this.

Personnel files of two staff recruited to the Fostering Service since the last Inspection were looked at. The files contained all of the required checks and references. An excellent pro forma sheet is now included in files, for the recording of the verbal follow-up of one of the two references.

Total number of staff of the agency:

24

Number of staff who have left the agency in the past 12 months:

2

Standard 16 (16.1 - 16.16)

Staff are organised and managed in a way that delivers an efficient and effective foster care service.

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

0

This Standard has not been identified as a core Standard and as such has not been Inspected on this occasion. This Standard was last Inspected on March 16th 2004 and assessed as being fully met.

Standard 17 (17.1 - 17.7)

The fostering service has an adequate number of sufficiently experienced and qualified staff and recruits a range of carers to meet the needs of children and young people for whom it aims to provide a service.

Key Findings and Evidence**Standard met?****3**

A structure map within the Statement of Purpose outlines the structure of the Children and Family Services. The Family Placements team is organised into two supervision groups supervised by two full time Team Managers, one focussing on pre approval (recruitment and assessment) tasks and the other on maintaining an active duty point for referrals. There is the equivalent of ten supervising social worker posts (sixteen staff) and a senior practitioner. Both groups support carers and carry significant caseloads.

Inspectors noted that supervising social workers of mainstream carers supervised an average of between 25 to 30 cases while those supervising higher maintenance remand/contract and community schemes hold less in order to meet required increased supervision and support levels. Supervising social workers are also additionally involved in recruitment, assessment and training. Managers and social workers acknowledged that there were occasions when placement matches and support, could be compromised because of the demands made upon the service. In January 2005, 270 carers were providing approximately 210 placements.

The Fostering Managers confirmed that although there was generally a good ratio of carers to Looked After Children there were shortages of placements in particular areas. A Statistical Report and Action Plan identifies the mainstream long term fostering resource as representing the greatest area of need. Initiatives to recruit new carers are ongoing. In the Team Meeting there was discussion about the professionally produced video, commissioned by the service, which was being shown on television and in mainstream cinemas. Recruitment targets for 2004-2005 are to recruit up to 50 new carers to replace the average number of carers who leave each year.

Four files were looked at of recently assessed and approved carers, one attending for Panel observed for Inspection purposes. Assessments were good, one being excellent. Three of these new carers had children placed within a month of being approved. All had taken children outside of their approval status. **(See requirement Standard 8)**

Standard 18 (18.1 - 18.7)

The fostering service is a fair and competent employer, with sound employment practices and good support for its staff and carers.

Key Findings and Evidence**Standard met?****0**

This Standard has not been identified as a core Standard and as such has not been inspected on this occasion. This Standard was last inspected on March 16th 2004 and assessed as being almost met. The shortfall identified in last year's inspection has been addressed under Standard 21.

Standard 19 (19.1 - 19.7)

There is a good quality training programme to enhance individual skills and to keep staff up-to-date with professional and legal developments.

Key Findings and Evidence**Standard met?****3**

All carers visited to during the Inspection made positive comments about training they had recently attended. They were able to link the training with their task and responsibilities. In some instances supervising social workers attend training with carers. A record of training was maintained in carer files and discussed at Annual Review.

Supervising social workers spoken to also had attended training this year, sometimes with carers. The Children and Adolescent Mental Health Services training was again noted to provide exceptional insight into the complex needs of Looked After Children. (This training is consistently identified at Inspections of both Independent and Local Authority Fostering Services as being excellent.) Concern was expressed that this training might in the future be targeted only to workers and carers of children and young people referred to this specialist Team.

Some placing social workers in their feedback to the Inspectors expressed a wish to be more actively involved in and consulted about foster carer training. They particularly felt that their involvement would be valuable at the assessment and preparation stage, noting how carers' expectations of children can be unrealistic and that some carers struggle to understand attachment issues. The Inspectors are aware that the fostering service Team Managers are planning to visit and meet up with the Child Care Operation teams this year to develop and establish closer working relationships and better communication systems with the teams. **This is commended. The Team Managers are recommended discuss with placing social workers areas of training where their contribution would be valuable.**

Standard 20 (20.1 - 20.5)

All staff are properly accountable and supported.

Key Findings and Evidence**Standard met?****0**

This Standard has not been identified as a core Standard and as such has not been Inspected on this occasion. This Standard was last Inspected on March 16th 2004 and assessed as being fully met.

Standard 21 (21.1 - 21.6)

The fostering service has a clear strategy for working with and supporting carers.

Key Findings and Evidence**Standard met?****3**

All carers visited said that they felt supported by their individual supervising social worker and more generally by the service. There were some good examples given by these carers of support being available during difficult situations and at weekends and evenings. **This is commended.**

Some excellent examples were seen within cases tracked, of supervising social workers undertaking individual pieces of work with carers.

Almost all carers in questionnaire feedback spoke positively about the support they received from the fostering service.

A new out of hour's telephone support service for carers is about to be launched and piloted for six months and this will be staffed on a voluntary basis by childcare social workers. The detail of the project was presented to the Leicestershire Foster Care Association committee meeting. Inspectors attended this meeting.

All carers are provided with paid membership of Fostering Network and the Leicestershire Foster Care Association. The chair of the local association said that generally, carers receive good support from the fostering service.

There are currently no carer support groups provided by the fostering service as such, and the Fostering Team Managers said that they would like to initiate the development of local support groups that would ultimately be self-sustaining. These groups would provide an ideal forum for training sessions and events.

Unannounced visits were recorded on all files tracked, and in two of these supervising social workers appropriately utilised this visit to review Health and Safety checklists.

In one case Inspectors were concerned to note that only one recorded supervision session with carers had taken place in nearly two years, since their approval. A number of visits had been recorded and the carers, although indicating that they were not sure what 'supervision' meant, did speak positively about their supervising social worker and of the support available to them. **The Team Managers are recommended to determine the minimum level of supervision frequency at Annual Review, and differentiate these from home visits.**

Standard 22 (22.1 - 22.10)

The fostering service is a managed one that provides supervision for foster carers and helps them to develop their skills.

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

0

This Standard has not been identified as a core Standard and as such has not been Inspected on this occasion. This Standard was last Inspected on March 16th 2004 and assessed as being almost met. Carer supervision is discussed under Standard 21.

Standard 23 (23.1 - 23.9)

The fostering service ensures that foster carers are trained in the skills required to provide high quality care and meet the needs of each child/young person placed in their care.

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

0

This Standard has not been identified as a core Standard and as such has not been Inspected on this occasion. This Standard was last Inspected on March 16th 2004 and assessed as being fully met. Carer training is discussed under Standard 19.

Records

The intended outcome for the following set of standards is:

- All appropriate records are kept and are accessible in relation to the fostering services and the individual foster carers and foster children.

Standard 24 (24.1 - 24.8)

The fostering service ensures that an up-to-date, comprehensive case record is maintained for each child or young person in foster care which details the nature and quality of care provided and contributes to an understanding of her/his life events. Relevant information from the case records is made available to the child and to anyone involved in her/his care.

Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?
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Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?
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Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?
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Records held by the Fostering Service and seen during the Inspection were generally clear and well organised.

During the Inspection the Inspectors requested a print out of Foster Carers, which detailed their respective approval status, however the computerised information system could not provide this. Such information is currently only available by accessing carer's individual records. In accordance with Regulation 31 **the Fostering Service Manager is required to ensure that a register of foster parents is retained which details the information listed in Regulation 31 (2)** Managers indicated that this could be achieved, however this was unlikely in the near future, in view of the weight of requests being made with regard to additions and changes to the information system. In addition to this **the Fostering Service Manager is required to ensure that Foster Carer Agreements include carer Terms of Approval as indicated in Schedule 5 of the Fostering Regulations.** (The Inspectors on previous Inspections had overlooked this.)

Three of the four carers visited were aware of the need to log and record events about the children placed with them, and to store records safely and securely. Not all records kept in carers houses were locked away although they were kept in cupboards and not visible. Supervising social workers are advised to remind carers that all records relating to accommodated children should be locked away.

Currently carers record all events (including health information) about all children accommodated with them, in one communal diary. Some carers have devised their own recording systems. Although a recommendation has been made regarding this, it was evident that the fostering service Managers are already aware that carers should be recording information about individual children in a consistent manner and on individual logs, and they are planning to launch a new system of recording and linked training on record keeping this year.

The fostering services Managers are recommended to ensure that carers maintain individual, and not communal records, on the children placed with them.

One set of carers were caught up with, what they felt was conflicting information, in a complex case where three social workers were involved. The same carers had still not received any Looked After Children documentation with regard to a child placed for three months with them.

Inspectors saw good examples of carers accumulating Life Story Work material. One set of carers had provided an excellent collection of photographs, charting the development of a baby placed for adoption.

Standard 25 (25.1 - 25.13)

The fostering service's administrative records contain all significant information relevant to the running of the foster care service and as required by regulations.

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

0

This Standard has not been identified as a core Standard and as such has not been Inspected on this occasion. This Standard was last Inspected on March 16th 2004 and assessed as being fully met.

Note requirement re regulation 31 (2)

The maximum payment indicated below, represents a contract care arrangement of £440 plus fostering allowance for someone age 16 plus.

Number of current foster placements supported by the agency:	219
Number of placements made by the agency in the last 12 months:	585
Number of placements made by the agency which ended in the past 12 months:	589
Number of new foster carers approved during the last 12 months:	39
Number of foster carers who left the agency during the last 12 months:	62
Current weekly payments to foster parents: Minimum £	76.69
Maximum £	568.80

Fitness of Premises for use as Fostering Service

The intended outcome for the following standard is:

- The premises used as offices by the fostering service are suitable for the purpose.

Standard 26 (26.1 - 26.5)

Premises used as offices by the fostering service are appropriate for the purpose.

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

0

This Standard has not been identified as a core Standard and as such has not been Inspected on this occasion. This Standard was last Inspected on March 16th 2004 and assessed as being fully met.

Financial Requirements

The intended outcome for the following set of standards is:

- The agency fostering services are financially viable and appropriate and timely payments are made to foster carers.

Standard 27 (27.1 - 27.3)

The agency ensures it is financially viable at all times and has sufficient financial resources to fulfil its obligations.

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

0

This Standard has not been identified as a core Standard and as such has not been Inspected on this occasion. This Standard was last Inspected on March 16th 2004 and assessed as being fully met.

Standard 28 (28.1 - 28.7)

The financial processes/systems of the agency are properly operated and maintained in accordance with sound and appropriate accounting standards and practice.

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

0

This Standard has not been identified as a core Standard and as such has not been Inspected on this occasion. This Standard was last Inspected on March 16th 2004 and assessed as being fully met.

Standard 29 (29.1 - 29.2)

Each foster carer receives an allowance and agreed expenses, which cover the full cost of caring for each child or young person placed with him or her. Payments are made promptly and at the agreed time. Allowances and fees are reviewed annually.

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

0

This Standard has not been identified as a core Standard and as such has not been Inspected on this occasion. This Standard was last Inspected on March 16th 2004 and assessed as being fully met.

Fostering Panels

The intended outcome for the following set of standards is:

- **Fostering panels are organised efficiently and effectively so as to ensure that good quality decisions are made about the approval of foster carers, in line with the overriding objective to promote and safeguard the welfare of children in foster care.**

Standard 30 (30.1 - 30.9)

Fostering panels have clear written policies and procedures, which are implemented in practice, about the handling of their functions.

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

Since the last Inspection, applicants for foster care are invited and encouraged to attend the Fostering Panel. A special colourful information leaflet has been devised for applicants, and this clearly explains the role of the Fostering Panel and their task in the approval process. **The production of this leaflet is commended.**

There is now a young person who has experienced foster care sitting on the Fostering Panel; he has had an active role in producing the above leaflet. There is a good range of skill mix and experience on the Fostering Panel and in addition to the 10 Panel members, one of the Team Managers acts as Panel Advisor, having an advisory consultative role also outside of Panel sessions.

Panel members attended a training day in November 2004 for which there was a very full and relevant agenda. Social work practitioners were involved in different presentations. The group also looked at 'What do we look at in a form F that helps us decide if someone will make a good foster carer'. The National Minimum Standards and Fostering Regulations were also discussed.

Inspectors observed a monthly Fostering Panel session at which time the Fostering Panel considered a new application (attended by applicants) in addition to Private Fostering Applications, Regulation 38 reports, and First Reviews. The Panel Chair was consistent in checking out with presenting social workers that appropriate checks had been undertaken for applications.

The Fostering Panel chair confirmed that she meets with the Agency Decision Maker either straight after the Panel, or the following day in most instances. This ensures that recommendations are swiftly discussed and that when Panel recommendations for approval are ratified that carers receive written confirmation promptly.

A Fostering Panel Code of Conduct is currently being written up, and all members will be provided with a copy.

The Fostering Panel is commended on its achievement and development over the last year.

Short-Term Breaks

The intended outcome for the following set of standards is:

- When foster care is provided as a short-term break for a child, the arrangement recognises that the parents remain the main carers for the child.

Standard 31 (31.1 - 31.2)

Where a fostering service provides short-term breaks for children in foster care, they have policies and procedures, implemented in practice, to meet the particular needs of children receiving short-term breaks.

Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	4
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In addition to a group of carers who provide a respite care service, now referred to as the short breaks project, the fostering service has an established contract respite carer to provide specialist respite provision for children with disabilities and complex health needs who would otherwise be in residential provision. Extra help is commissioned by the carers to assist with the care of the children, and the Inspectors have had some discussion with the Fostering Service Manager to clarify the role and status of these workers.

The carers, who are experienced in work with children who have a disability, have had their house appropriately adapted for this purpose, with e.g. track hoists, shower room and purpose built beds. They currently support nine respite placements.

For the purpose of this Inspection the above carers were visited and the Inspector was impressed with both the environment in which care is provided, and the professionalism and commitment of the carers. Very positive feedback was received from placing social workers and parents about the care provided. One commented 'These carers are committed to full service user participation and always keep parents and social worker fully informed'

The carers receive good support from their supervising social worker who has significant experience and knowledge about Disability issues, and also from social workers in the Children's Disabilities Team work closely with the carers. There is in addition, active involvement from Occupational Therapists.

The Manager of the fostering service indicated that it was hoped that the short break contract care scheme would be expanded.

The carers and the fostering service are commended on achievement of this innovative scheme and on the quality of care provided.

Family and Friends as Carers

The intended outcome for the following set of standards is:

- **Local authority fostering services' policies and procedures for assessing, approving, supporting and training foster carers recognise the particular contribution that can be made by and the particular needs of family and friends as carers.**

Standard 32 (32.1 - 32.4)

These standards are all relevant to carers who are family and friends of the child, but there is recognition of the particular relationship and position of family and friend carers.

Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?
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The pro-active, dedicated role of the senior practitioner with family and friends carers was acknowledged in the last Inspection report. This worker continues to respond swiftly to requests for Regulation 38 assessments presenting these with a recommendation to the Fostering Panel, and to appropriately promote the use of Residence Orders when processing and assessing kinship care placements. This senior practitioner produced an informative report for the Fostering Panel, seen by Inspectors, detailing the work he had undertaken over the last year. The report confirms his role in raising awareness of the positive use of Residence Orders with carers and with colleagues.

These placements can have positive outcomes for children and the senior practitioner's work is again recognised.

Two carers providing a family placement for relatives were visited during this Inspection. They were providing an excellent standard of care for two sisters, and were totally committed to providing them with a good education and stimulating environment. The children were settled and identified totally with their carers who were carrying out the parental role. The carers confirmed that they enjoyed a good level of support from their supervising social worker and that they enjoyed attending training.

In view of the increasing use of family and friends as potential carers consideration is currently being given to the recruitment of a second specialist post.

C.1 Registered Person's or Responsible Local Authority Manager's comments/confirmation relating to the content and accuracy of the report for the above inspection.

We would welcome comments on the content of this report relating to the Inspection conducted on week beginning 7th March 2005 and any factual inaccuracies:

Please limit your comments to one side of A4 if possible

Action taken by the CSCI in response to the provider's comments:

Amendments to the report were necessary

NO

Comments were received from the provider

NO

Provider comments/factual amendments were incorporated into the final inspection report

NO

Provider comments are available on file at the Area Office but have not been incorporated into the final inspection report. The inspector believes the report to be factually accurate

NO

Note:

In instances where there is a major difference of view between the Inspector and the Registered Provider responsible Local Authority fostering service Manager both views will be made available on request to the Area Office.

C.2 Please provide the Commission with a written Action Plan by Monday, 09 May 2005, which indicates how statutory requirements and recommendations are to be addressed and stating a clear timescale for completion. This will be kept on file and made available on request.

Status of the Provider's Action Plan at time of publication of the final inspection report:

Action plan was required

YES

Action plan was received at the point of publication

YES

Action plan covers all the statutory requirements in a timely fashion

YES

Action plan did not cover all the statutory requirements and required further discussion

NO

Provider has declined to provide an action plan

NO

Other: <enter details here>

NO

Public reports: It should be noted that all CSCI inspection reports are public documents. Reports on children's homes are only obtainable on personal application to CSCI offices.

C.3 PROVIDER’S AGREEMENT

Registered Person’s or responsible Local Authority Manager’s statement of agreement/comments: Please complete the relevant section that applies.

C.3.1 I Felicity Schofield of Leicestershire County Council Fostering confirm that the contents of this report are a fair and accurate representation of the facts relating to the inspection conducted on the above date(s) and that I agree with the statutory requirements made and will seek to comply with these.

Print Name _____
Signature _____
Designation _____
Date _____

Or

C.3.2 I Felicity Schofield of Leicestershire County Council Fostering am unable to confirm that the contents of this report are a fair and accurate representation of the facts relating to the inspection conducted on the above date(s) for the following reasons:

Print Name _____
Signature _____
Designation _____
Date _____

Note: In instance where there is a profound difference of view between the Inspector and the Registered Provider both views will be reported. Please attach any extra pages, as applicable.

APPENDIX A

RESPONSES TO QUESTIONNAIRES

Compilation of answers from questionnaires and requests for comments received from placing social workers, foster carers and children placed in foster care.

1. Answers to questions asked in Children's Questionnaires:

Please say what sort of help you get from your foster home with:

Staying healthy and how to look after yourself:

None, I do it by myself

We get a bit of help

Healthy diet. Have been encouraged to exercise regularly and keep hygienic too.

Healthy diet, exercise activities arranged, encouraged to shower, clean teeth, etc everyday

Get looked after very well, I get lots of help staying healthy

I get some help

I am quite healthy but I do like eating lots of sweets

Eating healthy food, getting lots of exercise

I am given healthy food, changing clothes

My carer is obsessed with how she wants to help, but is not helping, ends up having a go at me

Eating fruit & drinking lots of healthy juice

Good food, being told how to wash properly & dress properly

Fruit & hugs & play with my toys

Having healthy meals and am being taught social skills

Food always healthy. Get exercise by walking the dog

My carers feed me right & I like most things, so I eat a lot!

I eat fruit & veg, I'm only allowed one sweet a day

I'm given help with personal hygiene, exercise and my diet.

My foster carers make sure I get a healthy diet.

My carer encourages me to eat healthily. & to wash & brush my teeth everyday. Takes me for medicals, dental & eye checks

I'm encouraged to take regular exercise

Eating breakfast & healthy food, learning how to wash myself, dress properly & clean my teeth

Healthy & balanced meals

I get guidance on what I eat, I'm also encouraged to look after myself

My carers make sure that I'm alright and get a healthy diet

Your school or college work:

I get help with my homework

My school work is fine

My carers have helped me a lot in school

I get lots of help with my homework and my carers are in daily contact with my teachers

I am helped loads with education

I get a lot of help

I'm in the top sets at school, I do quite well

My carer tells me to try and do it all on my own, when I'm struggling with my work - not

really helping
I get no help
My carer helps me with spelling and also reads lots of books with me
Regular contact with school & always help with homework, attend all parents evenings
Carer always helps with homework
Carers always make sure I'm up-to-date on my work & help out
Do homework, carer makes me practice
I get help with revision, choices for GCSEs and homework
I get help with homework, sometimes
Help me with homework & revision for exams
Help with homework
Reading, writing & I.C.T, I also have a counsellor which helps me to talk
Carers check my homework & help me if needed
I am helped with my homework and problems
Carers make sure I'm in school, and try to make me do some studying

Your hobbies and activities:

I do football, tae-kwon-do and diving. I also attend a youth club
My hobby is te-kon-do
I enjoy walking and playing outside
Carers take me swimming, horse riding, to a drama club and cycling. I also have a PS2 and a computer
I play the drums and I go out on my BMX
Transport to football coaching & sport activities
I enjoy horse riding and swimming
Read with me and for me, take me to library, to educator gatherings and activities
LEGO, watching TV, climbing, football and the playstation
I enjoy hanging out with my friends and working. I am always being checked on by my carers though.
I play football
Collect cars (models), learning to canoe, Rugby
I like playing the recorder & dancing. I also get help with the computer
My carers take me to football training and to watch all the games
Swimming, football & dance
I am taken swimming and to the park.
Carers are helping me discover my hobbies. They provide the transport and encouragement
I go horse riding most weekends
I enjoy playing on my bike, games on the computer, reading and playing cards
My carers encourage me to go places
I like to cut up pictures to make cards for my friends and like listening to music
My carers take me to play golf and encourage me with any hobbies and activities I do
My carers pay for me to go to guides, swimming and biking
They make sure I don't get into trouble, because I don't really have a hobby

Please tell us if you think any changes should be made in the help foster children get:

We should be encouraged to eat healthier
I think all foster children should get lots of love & care (I certainly do)
More clothes
Carers should be encouraged not to be so obsessive about everything I do.
Bigger bedroom. More toys, more space to dance in bedroom!
Free entry for conkers
I'm more than happy with my foster carers

I think that foster children should only get help if they want it because they might feel unhappy

Foster children should be allowed more freedom

Please say what sort of punishments you have been given in your foster home:

I've been sent to my room. TV and phones disallowed.

Stay in bedroom, grounded, phones taken off us

I am encouraged to exercise more selfcontrol rather than being punished

Grounded for days, sometimes weeks. Fun activities withdrawn

Grounded, had my pocket money taken off me

Grounded

I'm always good and fine

I'm sent to my bedroom

Television and playstation taken away for a time

Pocket money stopped, music and TV not allowed, grounded, mobile phone taken off me.

Grounded

Lose playstation for certain time, made to sit in lounge with foster carers

Have had no punishments as I've been good all the time

I get grounded and my TV is taken away

TV, mobile, CD player taken off me. Sent to my room

Grounded, sent to my bedroom, no goodies and I lose pocket money

No phone for a while, grounded

Grounded, no pocket money, TV/music taken

Not allowed to go horse riding. Sometimes I'm grounded or sent to bedroom, mobile phone has also been taken away on occasion

Sent to bedroom for 10 mins

Grounded. Lose allowance or TV taken away

I've been a good girl, carer's not tell me off for anything!

Grounded from going out, stopped using the TV, my console and laptop

Not a lot really, just sent to my room or pocket money withheld

Get grounded, not allowed playstation

Are there punishments you have been given that you think shouldn't be allowed?

No none

Mobile phones should not be taken away

Not here

No all punishments are fair for what I did

No, I don't get punished

Yes, I love my music & TV and they shouldn't be taken away

None given

Yes, all of them

No at this one

No pocket money should not be withdrawn

Don't think mobile phones should be removed

All of them shouldn't be allowed

Do your foster carers ask you for your opinions and ideas?

Yes, they often ask me	48%	They ask sometimes	26%
They don't ask me very often	22%	No, they never ask me	4%

If you do get asked, what sort of things do you get asked about?

My school work and many other things too
Whether I need help at school
Where I'd like to go, consider my future and what clothes I like
On my birthday I get to choose what I want to do
TV programmes, food, places to visit, clothes, presents
I'm never asked anything
Where we want to go, what to eat, jobs to do in the house
Where I want to go
I'm asked what I want to do, working in the house (how to do things)
I'm asked if I'm alright and if I like what I'm given to eat, the TV, places to go
Everything (we discuss it all)
Asked about going out to places
About school work
About other foster kids coming into the home
Holidays, meals for the week, clothes
Don't get asked anything
If we're going to rent videos out, that's about it. and maybe about holidays sometimes
How I feel about my carers and my own memories
School - teachers, home, food
What I want for dinner
Foods, college, clothes, friends, TV, bedtimes, washthings
Asked if it's something to do with me or if it will have an effect on me
Asked why I did things or how
Dinner, when I'm having it, what I'm having, if I want to go out with carers

Can you tell us about something that was changed because of what you said?

None
Nothing
I'm trusted more. I can now go into town on my own with friends.
Contact with family, foods, Activities - sports/drama, Chores - feeding cat/washing car
Don't know
No I said nothing needed to be changed
Said I wanted to be home educated and I am now
Changed food, bedroom (layout), changed clothes/shoes
I have been allowed to say how my bedroom is being decorated
How I wanted my bedroom to be painted
Nothing
We talked about my behaviour and my behaviour has changed
Most things
I can now go to sleep with music on, having curtains open at night. Change in toiletries used
What I get to eat has changed and the time by which I must be home

Have the people who run the fostering service ever asked you for your opinions about your foster carers?

Yes 74% No 26%

Have the people who run the fostering service ever asked you for your opinions about how the fostering service could be made better?

Yes 48% No 52%

Does your social worker sometimes see you on your own to ask you your opinions?

Often 41% Sometimes 52% Never 7%

Have you been told how to make a complaint about how you are being looked after if you need to?

Yes 70% No 26% Not Sure 4%

Have you been told how to get in touch with Inspectors at the Commission for social Care Inspection if you needed to about how you are being looked after?

Yes 22% No 71% Not Sure 7%

Have you been given a Children's Guide or a leaflet telling you about you fostering service?

Yes 60% No 33% Not Sure 7%

What's the worst thing about fostering for you?

Living with my sister (sometimes)
Ain't allowed to go out if I don't keep bedroom tidy
Not able to wake up & give mum a kiss & say 'mum'
Nothing, I like being fostered
Not living with my own family
Not being with my real mum
I miss my mum and dad
Everything nearly, I hate being in care full stop
Social workers
Not being with mum
I miss Mum & Dad
Don't get to see family very often (like Mum)
Not living with our mum
Getting into arguments with other children
Having to put up with Social workers, they do my head in
Not seeing my mum
You get treated differently by your social worker
Agent meetings, letters etc, less freedom, example cant go to sleep round mates, unless lots of bother with social services

What's the best thing about fostering for you?

Getting to go on really good holidays now
My foster carers
Everything is safer, we're better looked after and we don't get beaten up
Get well fed & get a lot more pocket money now
I'm a lot happier now
When I need help, I now know and have someone to talk to about problems

Love it in the foster home where I am now
I'm now really well looked after
Pocket money, buy things, cooked food, always food in cupboard, computer & a nice home
Being part of a family
Being looked after
Getting to meet new people
Go to good caring people who care for me
Support, love & care
Get to live a home with a family
Meeting new people
Pocket money
Talking & eating & going everywhere with my carer. Was cold & hungry before going into foster care
You feel that you have a home
Having more money

Any further comments you would like the inspector to put in this report:

I'd really like to be allowed to go out without having room tidy everyday
Social Services should consider more where they place young children & make sure they'll fit in
My social worker is awful - she doesn't do what she says, leaves things to last minute and gets things muddled up
Don't know but does this report go to our carers?
Want a nice family & a little sister
My social worker is caring and I like her a lot
I'm happy with everything
I think that children should be treated normally around friends like people picking you up from home not school so that not everyone knows.
Yes, for Social Workers to take us more seriously

2. Answers to questions asked in Foster Carer Questionnaires:

What do you think are the BEST things about this Fostering Service

The relationship that foster carers have with their linkworker
Fostering service is very caring to both the children and their carers
Helping children
Normally able to get hold of person we need
They are a dedicated team of people helping to care for young children
The support network they provide for foster carers and fostered children
Most people that we've been involved with as carers are genuine people and committed to what they do
There is always someone to talk to
Believe children are best looked after as part of a family, and that's what the service promotes
The collaboration the service promotes between all parties ensuring that the best care is made available to each child
They're extremely organised
People in the service do a terrific job under difficult circumstances
The appreciation by most at the service foster carers offer
Support is always provided when it's needed
Being given the opportunity to improve our parenting skills
Good support service
Improvement of a child coming into your care
The support
Fostering itself
Good support
Excellent support
They're supportive to both carers & children
The support you're given as carers
We have a very supportive link worker
The care given to children and the commitment to their well being & personal development.
Helping children & their parents
The support we get from social worker and family placement team
Making a difference to children & giving them good start in life.
Fostering services are responsible for the child's, clothing, equipment
Good caring social workers and helpful receptionists
Giving the children a home, seeing them thrive and the times they say they love living with us
They try to keep in contact and return calls promptly
Support from my link worker is always only a phone call away
Child reviews and annual reviews are kept regularly
The support we get from our link workers
Always someone there if you need them; ready to listen and guide
Support is always just a phone call away

What do you think are the WORST things about this Fostering Service?

Assessment process was prolonged very slow
Not always getting services that some children need as quick as we need them
They can't arrange transport
Having a placement break down for whatever reason
Sometimes there can be too many people involved in the fostering process
Poor funding, lack of access to services to prevent problems occurring
Inflexibility for integration of foster children into family life and activities
Correct information about child's whereabouts is not always to hand causing difficulties
- especially when trying to coordinate emergency placements
Social workers are often too busy with workload and as such are often unavailable when we need them
The way the service treats kinship carers
The way sometimes that children are moved without warning
Not enough resources i.e. social workers, funding, foster carers
Inability to retain foster carers
Not enough recruited carers to give the options for more appropriate placements
Not always being told the full facts of a case
The requirement to fill in large number of forms
Not had any bad experiences to date
Funding
Financial side of it
Not being able to get hold of people when you need them and the time it takes to put things into action sometimes
The lack of communication between departments and problems caused by 'inter departmental politics'.
Very poor communication by foster child's social worker
Lack of resources - puts additional pressure on carers and children
Social workers not acting on what is said (rules & regulations)
EDT having to wait for return calls
The time it can take to become an 'approved' carer
Have not had any problems to date – sometimes new social workers seem a little inexperienced
Lack of contact between placements
They try to place children sometimes with little research into their requirements

Is there anything you think this Fostering Service should change about:

How it recruits foster carers?

Better advertising of the opportunities for foster carers
No – we found the process of recruitment very thorough
More publicity about fostering and how there is a need for more families to foster
Larger budgets
More money made available for positive marketing to raise profile of fostering
More advertising
Leaflets & TV adverts should be more widely employed
No, needs to be as it is to find right people doing their job
Advertise more
No - process for approval was thorough and professional
More media coverage
should stay as it is
Need to be more proactive to ensure fostering needs are met

How it assesses foster carers?

Speed up the process of assessment
Can't think of a better way
There can be long delays in the process to approve carers
No complaints - we found the service to be very good at assessing
Appears satisfactory
Make sure new carers are given a mentor/buddy for 1st few placements
No – perhaps too paper driven

How it arranges placements?

Better with forward planning,
Not enough information made available for kinship carers
Usually very good
Present placement seems fine
More information needs to be passed on to foster carers about the child being placed.
More information on contact arrangements, up to date and realistic information on the children being placed
No - arrangement was very professional and sensitively dealt with
The possibility of 'introductions' - especially if the child is to be placed long-term
A more detailed knowledge of the carers – ensuring they're appropriate to placement

How it supports foster carers?

More commitment needed by some Social Workers
There should be backup procedures in place for when a placement breaks down
Be there when children arrive to see what they actually arrive with
Better financial packages
Would help to have a mentor when starting as foster carer.
More resources needed
Mainly OK – more social workers and a bigger budget would always help
No we've had good support
Lack of resource needs to be addressed
Carers get very good support
Actually informing carers of what support (and respite opportunity) is available
The service actually taking the time to listen to carers
Social worker is generally late for meetings. I do not find this very professional

Reassure foster carers that the service is there, and available, to provide support when it's needed

How it supports foster children?

Identifying better the specific needs of each foster child placed

No – it's already a very good service

Once a child is settled, social workers should maintain reasonable contact, not withdraw almost completely

More resources made available

No – it's usually OK

Good support

Too many changes in Social Worker for children to keep up with – would be better if one social worker remained with child throughout process

None – support for the children is good

Social workers could improve, speed they get back to children who have concerns (few days can seem a lifetime for a child).

Children's social workers should discuss things with child more, especially before reviews for example

Communication with children is poor & inconsistent – could be better

Children are already supported by foster carers and social workers

A back up social worker would be a good idea. Should a child's allocated social worker become ill for instance.

We feel that the foster children already get a lot of support

How well, as a foster carer, do you feel supported by the fostering service?

I'm very satisfied	41%	Quite well	29%
OK most of the time	21%	Don't get enough support	7%
Not applicable	2%		

Please give examples of ways in which you are supported:

Supported by Linkworker all times, but felt let down by Social Worker in last placement
Good information is always supplied. We get training and help and our needs are always handled promptly

Always somebody to help

Excellent support from supervising social worker

We're supported through social worker - placement team & child social worker

Our link worker visits regularly and always returns our calls. Foster allowances paid on time.

Our social worker has been excellent at supporting us

When we're offered placements duty officer is attentive and happy to find out more information for us

Fostering S/W always available over the telephone and willing to visit when necessary.

Regular visits by link worker. Social worker for child usually responds very well and also visits regularly

Meetings arranged around carers & families, regular meetings & good communication - made to feel valued

Regular visits from link worker. Always there to listen. Lucky to have excellent link worker

Phone calls, regular meetings.

Financial support

Visits from link worker, always someone there

Support link work always there.

Got a good social worker who bends over backwards to support us

Our link worker, children's social worker on the end of a phone

My link worker can be easily contacted

We have a wonderful supervising social worker, always there for support and to listen to our concerns

Regular visits from Link worker, training given, social events

Regular visits by supervising social worker. Team and Service Manager are approachable and receptive

Link worker visits every couple of weeks to discuss any issues we may have

Great support from social worker, but concerned about the support given to her to allow her to support us better. Children's social worker support doesn't appear to be integrated.

My link worker often visits and rings

Regular visits, protective of our family, always ready to give financial support, prompt response to our concerns

We have been very well supported particularly when we've had challenging children

Link worker is very supportive - always talk things through and give suggestions

Social worker will give you advice

By visits, telephone calls and information sent through post

Link worker at end of phone (usually), always listens and provides assistance when asked

Supervising social worker visits regularly. Childs' S.W keeps in touch and is supportive

Fairly regular visits by our social worker

Training, listening, respite care

Regular visits from link worker and child's social worker

Please give examples where support was not provided:

No contact from Linkworker, since offer of placement

Social worker didn't visit enough, lack support in school, while help was badly wanted

Support for dealing with problematic children is often hard to get

Support was not available from the local authority where the children came from

We were not supported at all when we made a complaint.

Leaving Care needs to be better supported

Had very bad support when the placement became fragile

No instant respite available

Our placement occurred almost without notice, as a result there was not enough background information available to allow support of child

No support given by social worker for problems that arose for child while at school

We were not informed for a long time that respite daycare was available. Opportunities for 'paid for' training no longer seem available.

We had a placement that became extremely aggressive towards us. When we rang for support noone called us back. Things became so bad that we had to make our own way down to social services for help.

I have no recollection of support ever not being provided

There is not enough specialist support available (for children with specific difficulties)

Further comments about support for foster carers:

Foster carers should be supported fully at all times with the focus of care always being

the child
 Very little help sometimes – we do feel as though we're 'just left to get on with it'.
 More meetings would be of benefit to us
 Local F.C.A are very supportive - fortunately not had need to contact them
 Support varies greatly depending on the social worker
 Maybe training meetings with smaller numbers in carers homes would be better.
 Training offered locally would also be better.
 We generally feel well supported
 Respite is always important especially if placement poses a threat to stability of existing family
 The support network appears fairly comprehensive
 Always polite & deal with problem promptly as they can
 A good idea would be that carers should meet other carers with same sort of children to provide support for one another
 Relevant information should be available when required; not several days later
 Financial support is set at a basic level regardless of circumstances or the needs of child.
 Service is very good, they're always there when need them.
 How about a regional network of foster carers providing support for each other
 We're human ; not robots, so we have feelings
 Carers need to be told that support is there, and that they're not alone.

Are the fostering service good at letting you know about things concerning your foster children?

Yes 79% No 9% NA 12%

Are you consulted about important decisions in your foster children's lives?

Yes 79% No 9.5% Sometimes 2% NA 9.5%

Do you go to reviews?

Yes 96% No 2% NA 2%

Are you listened to if you do?

Yes 83% No 5% NA 12%

Have the fostering service provided written information about their expectations of you?

Yes 95% No 5% NA 0%

Have the fostering service made clear what punishments are acceptable?

Yes 93% No 7%

What do you think of these?

- Good, Clear guidelines
- Reasonable
- Correct
- Acceptable
- Fair
- Good
- Very fair and sensible

Generally can follow this, when doubt can talk to child's social worker.
 Guidelines are excellent
 Acceptable
 Helpful
 Acceptable
 Good
 Have had no reason to implement any of them
 Very reasonable
 Fully accepted & understood
 It's appropriate but sometimes conflicts with the child's needs to be parented
 They're OK
 We agree with the guidelines provided
 Acceptable
 Fine
 Good
 They're OK
 We're fine with their policies
 We're in agreement with their guidelines
 Acceptable
 Fine

Has the fostering service given you any written information about how you can make a complaint on a child's behalf if you need to?

Yes 88.1% No 2.4% NA 9.5%

Have you ever had to make a complaint on behalf of a foster child?

Yes 16.6% No 81.0% NA 2.4%

Have you been asked to take a child in an emergency?

Yes 62% No 26% NA 12%

Are you adequately informed about the backgrounds of the children you take?

Yes 69.0% No 16.7% NA 14.3%

Are you able to take all necessary decisions concerning the children in your care?

Yes 59.5% No 21.4% NA 19.0%

Do you think there are enough staff in the fostering service?

Yes 31% No 50% NA 19%

Please say whether you think they do a good job:

If social workers weren't so busy it would be a better service
 Yes
 Some are very good, some only react in an emergency
 Yes we do
 Yes; often beyond the call of duty
 Yes, but could be better if work load wasn't so high
 Most staff we have contact with do a very good job
 Varies Incredibly
 Yes , very hard working & caring
 Yes

Under the circumstances, they do an excellent job
 To the best of their ability under the circumstances
 Staff over the years have done an extremely good job
 Good job with the resources at their disposal
 A decent job in difficult circumstances
 Yes, excellent
 Yes
 Yes
 Yes
 Generally yes
 in general yes, considering their workload
 Have seen both sides, it depends on individual social workers
 Not too bad
 Excellent, very pleased with the support, help, encouragement and friendship we've received
 Yes, they do sometimes under difficult circumstances
 Yes
 They all do very good job
 Do a brilliant job, some even manage to have a great sense of humour!
 Yes
 Yes
 On the whole, yes
 All social workers do a very good job under difficult conditions. Having more social workers would always make a positive difference
 Excellent job
 Yes usually

Have the staff ever asked you your opinions about the way the service is run?

Yes 19% No 74% NA 7%

Any further comments about how the fostering service helps you to look after children?

The service care about their carers and children. Always helpful
 Been satisfied, overall, and have enjoyed fostering
 Service is very slow in providing support and training
 We will stay with the service as we can always depend on the support they give
 We're mainly very happy - odd exceptions re- budgets, but always have support.
 People are dedicated and excellent
 Regular contact, listening to our views, giving advice, training sessions, get together so can talk to other carers
 Placement have at the moment has worked really well. Better than any other placement. Get lots of support.
 No, as every child's different
 Our link worker always puts our interests first
 Service could run courses for our own young people, on how to deal with children that come to share their homes.
 An annual party where we could meet other foster carers, social workers and even children we've looked after in past perhaps
 Things have run very smoothly for us with our two long term placements.
 Service should not apply pressure to take on more placements.
 We're very happy with the working relationship we have
 The service has helped keep us focused when things go a bit wrong and have always

helped us to do the right thing for the children We have always been reassured.

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